

## **HB 247 - Election Law - Voting Order Priority - In**

Uploaded by: Antoine, Joanne

Position: FAV

March 23, 2021

**Testimony on HB 247**  
**Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance**  
**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports HB 247, which would require a chief election judge to make reasonable accommodations to ensure that disabled voters and voters with children or disabled children are able to vote without discomfort.

The long wait times experienced by many Marylanders voters in prior elections – including this past election – created an unnecessary barrier to voting, especially for those voters unable to stand for long periods of time. Two or three hour waits in the cold, standing or waiting in a long line, is a tremendous physical hardship for voters with disabilities. Additionally, voters with young children, especially children with special needs, who can't secure reliable and affordable childcare before going to the polls can especially experience difficulty if polling place lines are long, requiring additional time away from home in a long line with children. This bill would allow those voters to move to the front of the line to vote, ensuring that they are not unduly impacted by long lines at the polls.

**Suggested amendment:** Voters should be made aware of all assistance available when voting in person, including the placeholder option. Clear signage both inside and outside of polling locations, in addition to improved training for judges, will help to ensure that goal. We encourage incorporating images into these signs for those voters who are unable to read. These signs should also be made available in multiple languages, ensuring voters whose first language is not English are also made aware of the assistance available to them. We also recommend prioritizing the placeholder option before allowing a voter to advance to the front of the line.

While we encourage continued action to reduce the lines and wait times for all voters, we feel this is an important issue to address. Voting is a fundamental right and we appreciate the continued focus by this committee in ensuring access to voting for all citizens.

We support HB 247 and urge a favorable vote.

## **HB 247 Voting Order Priority Individuals Who Need**

Uploaded by: Bresnahan, Tammy

Position: FAV



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**HB 247 Election Law – Voting Order Priority – Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance**  
**FAVORABLE**  
**Senate Education Health and Environment Committee**  
**March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education Health and Environment Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. As you know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Maryland, encompassing over 850,000 members.

I am here today to support HB 247, which requires that specified individuals with a mobility problem (or assisting such an individual), or accompanied by either a young child or a child with a disability, be given voting order priority at a polling place. The bill specifies procedures associated with providing those individuals with voting order priority and requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to adopt regulations regarding notice to voters, election judge training, and data collection relating to voting order priority.

AARP believes that voting-rights laws should address the needs of people with mental as well as physical disabilities. Increasing numbers of Americans have dementia or other cognitive impairments. Laws must protect vulnerable populations' access to the polls.

Federal laws mandate improved access to registration and polling places. They also require better outreach to older adults and people with disabilities.

**AARP Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 247.**

For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.



## **HB247 Election Law - Accommodations for Voters in**

Uploaded by: Bullis, Michael

Position: FAV

Support HB247: Election Law - Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance

March 25, 2021

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

Centers for Independent Living have been at the forefront of ensuring the rights of people with disabilities. Voting is a cornerstone of our democracy and for too long people with disabilities have struggled to exercise their right to vote. The legislation will forever change the way in which people with disabilities are accommodated in the polling place and ensure that people with disabilities can equitably engage in the voting process.

The undersigned Centers for Independent Living strongly urge a unfavorable report on this bill.

Katie Collins-Ihrke, Executive Director  
Accessible Resources for Independence  
1406B Crain Hwy South, Suite 206  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

Sarah Sorensen, Executive Director  
Independence Now  
12301 Old Columbia Pike, Suite 101  
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Michael Bullis, Executive Director  
IMAGE Center  
Hampton Plaza, 300 E. Joppa Road, Suite 312  
Towson, MD 21286

Dave Drezner  
The Freedom Center  
550 Highland Street, Suite 510  
Frederick, MD 21701

# **HB0247\_Represent Maryland\_Favorable\_EHEA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Demnowicz, Cristi

Position: FAV



**BILL:** HB0247

**BILL TITLE:** Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance

**BILL SPONSOR:** Delegate Guyton

**COMMITTEE:** EHEA

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

**HEARING DATE:** March 25, 2021

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0247**

Cristi Demnowicz, Chair  
Represent Maryland

Who votes first is not a contest. In civilized society, members who need more time or extra accommodations due to physical or mental divergences should be respected. This bill is not controversial and we hope the committee will find it favorable to send to the senate floor.

Sincerely,  
Cristi Demnowicz, Chair  
Represent Maryland  
Maryland Voter-D7

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Represent Maryland is a grassroots anti-corruption group of citizen advocates that #FightForDemocracy in Maryland. Our democracy solutions include: Public Election Funds, Independent Redistricting, Special Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, Increased Ethics and Transparency, and Increased Voter Participation. Learn more about our work at [www.RepresentMaryland.org](http://www.RepresentMaryland.org)

Authorized by Represent Maryland PAC, T Miller, Treasurer



## **HB 247 - Favorable - Guyton.pdf**

Uploaded by: Guyton, Michele

Position: FAV

MICHELE GUYTON  
Legislative District 42B  
Baltimore County

Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 25, 2021

**Support HB 247**

**Election Law – Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance**

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of HB247 as amended by the Ways and Means Committee. This legislation requires that in consultation with local boards the State Board of Elections will develop training materials in the various methods that an election judge may use to accommodate voters in need of assistance at a polling site; including those who are elderly or disabled and have a mobility problem, are assisting an individual with a mobility problem, or are accompanied by a child with a disability.

The legislation is intended to encourage those who would be unable to comfortably wait in long lines to participate fully in the political process. HB247 also requires that polling places post visible notices that special assistance is available if requested and that election judges allow voters for whom it may be extremely difficult or painful to wait in line to request voting priority based on guidelines developed by the Board of Elections.

The National Organization on Disability reports that individuals with disabilities are between 12-20% less likely to vote than those without challenges and are seriously underrepresented at the polls. While vote by mail provides one option, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 requires states to provide the same opportunity for access and independence to all voters and mandates that we must offer voters with disabilities the same opportunity to vote in person as other citizens

A primary obstacle to voting for the disabilities community includes problems with accessibility and long lines according to the Governmental Accountability Office. It is important to note that while a 1-2 hour wait may be an annoying inconvenience to many of us, for someone with a disability or a child with a disability it may be a painful and insurmountable impediment.

I request a favorable report on HB247 to allow all of our citizens to participate fully in the political process.

Sincerely,

Delegate Michele Guyton

- Sadly, those who have the most trouble voting tend to become discouraged and disenfranchised, but may actually need a voice in our political system the most. While discussing this bill, I have been surprised by how many people believe that accessibility is not a real issue at the polls and that those

## **HB 247 - Favorable - Killgallon.pdf**

Uploaded by: Guyton, Michele

Position: FAV

## **H.B. 247 TESTIMONY (SUPPORT)**

On behalf of Maryland handicapped voters, I support legislation for provision of a second line at polling places for handicapped voters, or an alternate plan to achieve the same goal: better accessibility.

Presently, handicapped persons wait a long time in line at polling places under great duress waiting to vote. A second line for vetted handicapped persons would benefit them immensely. Sadly, because of long lines at the polling place, handicapped persons simply stay away and don't vote--in effect, virtually disenfranchised.

Currently the Maryland Department of Transportation provides permanent hang-tags, and accompanying the tags a permit card that says "MVA Disability Parking Certification" and the name of the person. That—or the hang-tag itself--could be used at polling places to allow the disabled to go to a special second line to vote. Maryland law should also allow for a companion to accompany the disabled person.

The provision of a second line, described above, is only one possible solution. Others that are clearly promulgated through media and mailings and obvious at each polling place could accomplish the same goal: namely, greater and faster access to voting.

I sent this suggestion to the Maryland State Board of Elections. Here is their response:

"To make your suggestion a law, you should talk to you local State representatives. They are the folks that make that laws and then we will implement them."

I followed their suggestion by contacting my state representatives, and now ask you to support HB 142 to benefit handicapped Maryland voters.

On behalf of those voters, I thank you.

Sincerely,

Don Killgallon

13801 York Road, apt. U-104

Cockeysville, MD 21030

## **HB 247.FAV.MACS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kallins, Lauren

Position: FAV

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**Laura Howell,**

Executive Director

March 24, 2021

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
Committee**

**HB 247: Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance**

**Submitted by Laura Howell, Executive Director**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS) is a non-profit association of over 100 agencies across Maryland serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). MACS members provide residential, day and supported employment services to thousands of Marylanders, so that they can live, work and fully participate in their communities.

Though Maryland statute protects the right of people with IDD to vote, that right can become a hollow promise when long lines and/or the physical layout of a particular polling location presents challenges for a person with a mobility impairment—even when the polling place is otherwise ADA compliant. Similarly, a family member or direct support staff, who may not have a mobility impairment themselves, but who are providing support to someone with mobility challenges who must accompany the family member or staff to the polling place, may face a similar barrier to voting. The accommodations afforded by this bill would help clear the path of these obstacles and ensure participation in the voting process.

The Supreme Court has recognized the right to vote as a fundamental liberty interest and MACS is in strong support of efforts to remove barriers that impede the free exercise of this right.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.



# **HB 247- The Arc Maryland- Support Senate EHEA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kolp, Ande

Position: FAV

**HB 247: Election Law - Voting Order Priority - Individuals Who Need Extra Assistance**

**Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**March 25, 2021**

**Position: Support**

The Arc Maryland is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. We support HB 247 because we believe it will help people with disabilities to access the right to vote; a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and deserve to exercise.

This legislation will allow those with mobility issues or those supporting people with mobility issues, those with a young child, or with a child with disabilities to be given priority in voting lines, the use of ballot marking machines, and ballot scanning.

We feel that the requirement, in the bill, for the State Board of Elections to create regulations to ensure that Election Judges are appropriately trained is a key component to ensure that appropriate access and accommodations are supplied to people who need extra assistance to vote.

The bill also requires notices posted in voting centers to alert eligible voters that they may seek priority status. Finally, this legislation requires the collection of data to determine the effectiveness of the system and level of participation.

We believe this bill is one more step toward equity in access to the right to vote for people with disabilities. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Ande Kolp

Executive Director

[akolp@thearcmd.org](mailto:akolp@thearcmd.org)

[www.thearcmd.org](http://www.thearcmd.org)

# **HB 392 - Disability Screening - SENATE CROSS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Peterson, Matt

Position: FAV

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Zionist Organization of America  
Baltimore District



## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

### House Bill 392 – Child Care Centers – Early Childhood Screening and Assistance

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 25, 2021

## SUPPORT

**Background:** House Bill 392 (HB392) would require all licensed child care centers in the state to offer screenings for developmental disorders. Each enrolled child under three years of age would be offered an evaluation for developmental disorders. Additionally, the center would be required to provide the parents or guardian of each child under three with information about the Maryland Infants and Toddlers program, and contact information for the appropriate local or state agency that administers the program.

**Written Comments:** There is no doubt that developmental disabilities have a great impact on our community, and on families, which is why it is imperative that we are able to detect these disabilities as early as possible. Nationwide it is estimated that nearly one in six children are born with a developmental disability. In Maryland we have seen children diagnosed with autism at a rate of one in 50, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In 2018, Maryland had the second highest rate of autism diagnoses in America. As the legislative arm of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, we represent the Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Community Services, two agencies which serve individuals and families impacted by developmental disabilities.

No parent expects their child to be diagnosed with a developmental disability, however the reality is that we will continue to see more and more diagnoses. As devastating as the news may be, when a family learns that their child has a developmental disability earlier in that child's life, the better the future will be for them. Having this service available to them will ensure that the child can receive the services they need early on. This bill not only ensures they are screened for developmental disabilities, but if they are found to have any, they will be referred to the appropriate support services.

As a State we have an obligation to ensure children with developmental disabilities are able to live their lives fully and with dignity. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB392.

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated



# **HB 247 Senate Voting Order Priority.pdf**

Uploaded by: Walmsley, Keith

Position: FAV



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

### Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

March 25, 2021

### HB 247: Election Law - Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a statewide public policy organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, **the DD Council supports HB 247.**

#### **WHY is this legislation important?**

- Voting is a fundamental right that Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to participate in.
- All of Maryland's voters must be able to access their fundamental right to vote simply.
- There can be many barriers to voting for a person with a disability, providing priority in a voting line lowers one of those barriers.
- Helps ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Help America Vote Act.

#### **WHAT does this legislation do?**

- Those with mobility issues and those supporting people with mobility issues, those with a young child, or with a child with disabilities to may request or be granted priority in voting lines, the use of ballot marking machines, and ballot scanning.
- Requires the State Board of Elections to create regulations to ensure that Election Judges are appropriately trained.
- Ensures notices are provided to alert eligible voters that they may seek priority status. Additionally, this initiative calls for the collection of data to determine the effectiveness of the priority system and level of participation.

HB 247 is another step in the right direction towards informing and empowering all of the voters of Maryland, including those with developmental disabilities.

Contact: Keith Walmsley, Director of Public Policy Initiative; [KWalmsley@md-council.org](mailto:KWalmsley@md-council.org)